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ABSTRACT

This final report attempts to capture the work and atmosphere of the recent symposium convened by Motivational Educational Entertainment, Inc. (MEE), a black-owned communications research, consulting, and video production company. In its commitment to helping urban youth, MEE conducted a study of the "hip-hop" generation and its alienation from not only white mainstream America, but also from much of the black community. The symposium provided a forum and structure for debate about what should be done to reach urban youth. The keynote address by Johnnetta B. Cole outlined challenges for adults and for the hip-hop generation themselves. The keynote speech was followed by the MEE video "Reaching the Hip-Hop Generation." Panel discussions and working sessions on the second day included teens in the discussions of the video and the MEE report on urban youth. Recommendations for further education and additional symposia are included. Appendixes contain press articles, ratings from symposium evaluation sheets, and a summary of evaluation forms (comments) from symposium evaluation sheets). (SLD)

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THE MEE SYMPOSIUM

"REACHING THE HIP-HOP GENERATION"

ED 378 283

FINAL (SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS) REPORT

MAY 1993

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THE MEE SYMPOSIUM

"REACHING THE HIP-HOP GENERATION"

Final (Symposium Proceedings) Report by
MEE Productions, Inc. to
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

May 1993

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THE MEE SYMPOSIUM

FINAL SYMPOSIUM REPORT

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THE MEE SYMPOSIUM

FINAL SYMPOSIUM REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

The goal of this final (closing) report is to capture the work and the flavor of the recent symposium convened by Motivational Educational Entertainment, Inc. (MEE), a black-owned communications research, consulting and video production company based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. MEE's mission is to understand, reach and positively affect inner-city youth.

MEE, in its commitment to helping teens persevere and prosper in the tough environment of our nation's inner cities, conducted a unique study of the "hip-hop" generation. The study found that the music-centered, male dominated, rebellious, assertive voice of urban youth shapes the language, culture, fashion, hairstyles and world view of a new generation - a generation alienated not only from the Eurocentric dominant culture, but, to a surprising degree, from its own African-American heritage.

Most segments of society -- government agencies, corporate America, non-profit organizations, churches and concerned parents and teachers -- have made efforts to communicate informative and pro-social messages to at-risk teens in the African-American community. While these efforts are worthwhile, their effectiveness, especially the impact of media public service campaigns, is open to question. Our research has found that message strategies and delivery systems that prove effective for mainstream audiences are less successful with African-Americans.

The challenge for us then, is to find more effective methods for communicating to this audience. We must deal with the perception of many urban youths that "no one is really talking to me." The messages we think we are sending them aren't getting through. They may hear them, can recite them, but do not believe and/or internalize them.

The basic model of communication consists of the sender who creates a message, which is sent via some channel to a receiver who interprets the messages. Over the years, senders have created many, many messages targeted at our nation's urban youth. The real question is *if* and *how* those messages are being received.

MEE researchers discovered that there are a number of faulty assumptions which contribute to this lack of communication: that there is a homogeneous "street culture;" that inner-city youth are making decisions in their mid-teens about whether to use drugs or engage in other self-destructive or anti-social acts (decisions are actually being made much earlier); that the dominant culture's style of communication is effective with an audience that comes from a long oral tradition; and that super-parental injunctions like "Just say no!" and "Stay in school," coming from mainstream society are believable. It's not that simple!

Traditional communication approaches from mainstream sources to at-risk youth often don't account for the unique way youth communicate among themselves and how they relate to the media. This understanding, however, is crucial.

> "The system has always been wack. The hip-hop generation is not the first one to rebel. This is a continuous struggle. We've got to learn to take responsibility."
>
> --Symposium participant

To truly understand the complete picture, the people who create and send both entertaining and educational messages to urban youth must be brought into the dialogue. MEE stepped in to create that dialogue on March 1 and 2, 1993, when it convened the message "senders" in a national forum in New York City. This symposium provided an important opportunity for senders to meet and evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of their messages.

In addition, the MEE symposium provided a much-needed forum and structure for the continuing public debate about what needs to be done to reach today's urban teens, an opportunity to share ideas -- and more importantly -- to forge creative solutions. During the day-and-a-half gathering, the participants examined what can and should be done, and also *why* things are *not* being done.

> "A lot of the questions that young people have, adults don't have the answer for."
>
> -- Youth Social Worker, NYC

This unprecedented assemblage was made possible by generous support from a number of organizations who shared MEE's vision of creating a better life for inner city-youth. These committed organizations are actively working toward being part of the solution, not part of the problem. We applaud them for their insight and thank them for their assistance:

- The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- United States Department of Health and Human Services
- Center for Substance Abuse Prevention and its Urban Youth Campaign
- Office of Minority Health
- United States Department of Energy
- Proctor and Gamble Corporation

We give special thanks to The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the primary sponsor of both this symposium and MEE's research, that resulted in the symposium. We also warmly acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Diane Bricker, Michael and Wanda Cooper, and Calvert Social Venture Partners.

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II. SYMPOSIUM GOALS/OBJECTIVES (THIS IS WHAT WE WANTED TO DO)

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After two years of extensive primary research, MEE Productions published The MEE Report: "Reaching the Hip-Hop Generation" in May 1992. Several basic challenges arose from this work: to better understand the "hip-hop" generation, i.e. urban youth; to change mainstream America's perception of this population; to reshape how we listen to and communicate with them; and to think about what messages need to be developed and how those messages should be packaged.

The MEE symposium was one of the first times that leading figures in media, government, private industry, education, youth agencies and urban teens themselves were gathered in one location to talk about how to create and deliver positive messages to urban youth. It was also hoped that after gaining a better understanding of the youth audience, we could begin to address our second objective -- to develop communication strategies to reach urban youth with pro-social and anti-self destructive messages.

The format encouraged attendees not only to receive information, but to be active participants in forging solutions to the many issues facing America's young men and women. While the format was designed to take maximum advantage of having a wealth of expertise focused on our most pressing youth problems, the attendees were challenged to grapple with issues that were at times unwielding and even intimidating.

> "We've got to come up with solutions -- we can't just worry about bouncing ideas off each other. Hopefully, after this symposium, we can have some kind of solutions that we can start implementing on television, in magazines or at more of these symposiums. Hopefully, we're drawing a blueprint right now."
>
> - Chubb Rock

An important construct of the design of the symposium was the inclusion of a representative sample of the "receivers" -- urban youth. Teens from four major urban centers (New York City, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. and Chicago) were on hand to serve as a "reality check" as the symposium attendees went forward with the work of creating solutions.

III. SYMPOSIUM ACTIVITIES (THIS IS WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED)

Keynote Speaker - Dr. Johnnetta B. Cole

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The conference was held over two days at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza in mid-town Manhattan. Monday, March 1st, was set aside for a crucial orientation on the issues to be addressed; the objectives of the symposium; and the format/structure to accomplish the objectives. MEE used a three-pronged approach to achieve this *orientation* objective: a position paper to be read and digested by the participants; a keynote speech delivered by the president of Spelman College, Dr. Johnnetta B. Cole; and a premiere screening of MEE's video documentary, "Reaching the Hip-Hop Generation."

- Keynote Address

A highlight of the symposium's first day was the keynote speech delivered by Dr. Cole, the dynamic president of one of America's leading institutions of higher learning. Dr. Cole held the diverse crowd, both adults and teens, spellbound as she outlined the challenges that face our nation's young and those who are committed to helping them.

Cole urged the crowd not to give up hope because the problems that make these times tough for so many Americans are not insurmountable -- not with an open and honest discussion and sharing of ideas. Most important, she said, is a commitment *from* adults to action: "...we too have a responsibility to help save our children, to re-capture our youth from the destructive traps they are caught in, to re-establish some of those mighty values that brought us through times that were far worse than these...human slavery."

In addition, Cole laid out the challenge to participants. She urged rap artists to use their beats and lyrics to promote unity, self-esteem and success among their peers and she urged film and TV producers to be more positively creative and innovative. Cole also urged educators to discover new and effective ways of teaching. It is essential, she said, for everyone to work together to formulate a strategy that works because "hip-hoppers, with all other young people all across our country, deserve a chance to work side by side with us in making decisions in the here and now... It is inevitable as the passage of time that one day the youth will be in charge. The only question remaining is how well prepared will they be to handle that responsibility."

- The MEE Video Documentary

Following that speech, MEE premiered its graphic and hard-hitting video documentary, "Reaching the Hip-Hop Generation." This ground breaking work, bringing

together rap music, hip-hop culture and live interviews, gave the audience an uncensored view of the cultural and communication dynamics of urban youth. The video brings the findings of The MEE Report to startling life by focusing on the often-overlooked voices of inner city youth, shattering many of the myths that surround them.

MEE took its camera directly to the streets of America's inner cities, talking to youth in the places where they hang: at the mall, in the dance halls, at school, and on some of the most "happening" streets in town. The hip-hop outlook was stark and dramatic, but most of all, it was *real*. The outspoken young people in MEE's video addressed many pressing social issues: violence, drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy.

Some participants felt that the documentary showed only the negative, darker side of urban life, and that by omitting the positive stories, only served to confirm the negative stereotypes of minority youth by mainstream America. Since it was not MEE's intent to suggest that there is only one side to the urban reality, MEE is developing a discussion guide that will place the feelings and thoughts expressed in the video into a broader public health perspective. The guide is intended to eliminate any possible misinterpretations or careless assumptions by viewers who see the documentary without proper context.

The guide for the video documentary is targeted at adults and youth-service providers who (1) need (self-education) to further understand the realities and pressures of the street from the teen's perspective (from their world view), and (2) need a tool to initiate and maintain an informative discussion with youth.

The view after the first evening was sobering, and many participants reported that while they at first felt overwhelmed, it was at the same time crystal clear that a lot of communication and dialogue needed to take place. Everyone was asked to *re-read* the symposium's position paper so that they could remain focused on the tasks at hand and refresh their memory of the symposium's format and structure. After an evening to mull over the challenges ahead of them, the participants spent Tuesday, March 2nd, involved in panel discussions and working sessions.

- Orientation and General Panel

MEE President Ivan Juzang greeted the 300 participants to the second day's activities and briefly outlined the format for the day. A general panel, "Understanding the Hip-Hop Generation," would be followed by two working sessions. Juzang emphasized the

importance of going into the day's proceedings with an open mind. "One of the needs of the symposium," he said, "is to change the way the nation listens to and interacts with urban teens."

> "The vocals [of rap music] are a rage against modern-day slavery -- an urban guerrilla commentary."
>
> -- Chuck D, Public Enemy

The audience, composed mainly of persons who send out a wide variety of pro-social/anti-destructive messages to urban youth, and who are grappling with similar issues in a variety of arenas, were encouraged to work together, to pool their creativity and come up with solutions. Facilitator Nadir Muwwakil provided mind-stretching exercises to challenge the audience to be more than mere spectators. "We want to tap every brain that's in here," he said. He urged people not to bring their own biases and stereotypes to their discussions and interactions. "Let's put that stuff we think we know aside and open up and make some room for new stuff!"

In order to better understand urban youth, MEE urged participants to "go outside the box," to go beyond the popular myths that exist about African-American youth. As Dr. Cole remarked in her opening-night speech, "Their overlapping lifestyles may be indistinguishable to those who don't care enough to look below the surface, behind the seemingly surly facades, under the clothes worn backwards and funky hairdos, to see the people underneath. There is no real mystery if we truly look...and more importantly, listen!"

As part of the mind-opening process and in an effort to hear directly from the unifying force that brought everyone together, the assemblage was treated to a performance by the four-man hardcore rap group, Sounds of Rage. The group, from North Philadelphia, performed a self-penned tune, "Attitude," adopted as MEE's theme song. The song encompasses both the positive and "negative" attitudes of today's urban teens -- the realities of their lives.

The key findings of The MEE Report were then presented by MEE researcher Patrick McLaurin, who laid out the aims of the report and presented a context and perspective for the day's work. The MEE Report, he said, was designed with one purpose in mind: to figure out how to "send positive messages to impact an audience to change behavior in a certain direction." He differentiated MEE's efforts from commercial marketing, which is targeted at influencing consumer behavior and may not always have youths' best interest in

mind. Findings McLaurin shared included:

* Urban youth mature at a much faster rate and are forced to deal with adult consciousness well before their time.
* The hip-hop culture is very diverse, segmented, and differentiated; it is a male-centered culture, with a strong "spiral of silence" which quashes ideas that may differ from the group's thinking.
* To produce an effective message, senders must reflect urban teens' view of the world.
* Fear appeals don't work.
* Media channels must be credible, accurate and current in order to be effective.

> "Our community is fighting the same struggle on different levels. We need to bridge that gap [between blacks in corporate America and those on the grassroots level] and come together as a unified, focused people who know what we want to do."
>
> -- Youth social worker, NYC

Following those introductory presentations, the first panel of the day, "Understanding the Hip-Hop Generation," began. The aim of this panel was to increase knowledge and understanding of the hip-hop culture. Each panelist gave an opening statement regarding his view of hip-hop culture. Some representative remarks:

Chubb Rock disagreed with the media's labeling of the hip-hop generation as the *lost generation*: "I don't really think it's any different than the teenagers in the '60's and their music." He believed that hip-hop can fill a role that parents often cannot: "Parents want you to obey just because they say so, without listening to their children. Hip-hop, through sharing real experiences will give you the whys and why-nots." He also urged participants to make good use of their chance to work together. "We have to realize," he said, "that this is a serious situation... Hopefully with this symposium, we can try to reach a common solution for a common problem."

Dave Mays, from The Source, a leading magazine on hip-hop culture, urged people to put aside negative preconceptions and come at hip-hop music with a base of appreciation. He described it as an incredible, dynamic, powerful art form and culture that gives many young people a sense of identity.

Chuck D, leader of Public Enemy, described hip-hop culture as angry about white supremacy and the modern-day slavery of African-Americans. Since the media controls the mainstream viewpoint, he said,

> "Youth are making up their own rules because there's a lack of black adults that are truly adults."
>
> -- Chuck D, Public Enemy

rap offers a counterpoint to that vision, providing much-needed urban guerrilla commentary. He also cited the universality of rap music: "Hip-hop is all over the world," he said. "On every continent, it is the music of rebellion."

Snake Plitzkin of Sounds of Rage declared, "Just listen to what the youth are saying. The video last night said it all. If you don't get it by now, it's on you!"

The morning panel also included an unplanned, unscheduled performance by a NYC rap group, The Four Winds, part of the Mountain Valley youth group. One of the members urged everyone to pay attention to the music because "it's a reflection of what's happening on the streets. It's true, it's real, some people don't want to face it, but you can't run from it. It's like trying to hide from yourself." The impromptu performance brought the attendees to their feet.

The larger group was then divided into two sections for simultaneous workshops: "How to Develop the Message" in the morning and "How to Package and Deliver the Message" in the afternoon.

- Developing the Message

What came through clearly in MEE's focus groups was that youth *do* know right from wrong and that they are looking for more information to help them make decisions. "Don't tell us what not to do," they said, "tell us what to do and how to do it, step-by-step, without losing approval of our peers." At the same time, youth need guidance in how to break the "code of silence" that operates within their peer group. The working session came up with a number of possible strategies:

* Young people must be part of creating the solutions. They can decide issues of importance and need to begin to feel empowered to do so. We must provide opportunities for youth to discuss issues among themselves and create their own messages.
* Surprisingly, even teens believed that parents still have an important role in the lives of young people and should provide rules and guidance for them. Urban Black adults, our very first teachers, need to be the ones to send messages to the youth in their communities and should be prepared to lead by example.
* Message senders must commit themselves to understanding the realities of the inner city environment.
* There is no substitute for embracing our youth, and putting in the time to make them feel special, valued, important. They need to hear the positives of being young and Black in America; they need to be applauded for their successes.
* Youth need to feel that they have our respect and trust, and that we care about them

and are willing to collaborate with them. As one young social worker put it, they need to hear "I'll love you. I'll die for you. I'll be here for you!" Instead of fighting different struggles on different levels, adults need to be more inclusive and bridge the gap, coming together with youth with a common focus -- survival and success.

* We need messages that engage youth to join the struggle to look at the bigger picture, and fight against issues on a bigger scale, not just to changing their individual behaviors. We need messages that inspire youth to join a movement against the systems that marginalize and ignore them.
* Don't talk kids to death. Keep messages short and to the point.
* Be specific and concrete. Step-by-step guidance is necessary.

- ***"Media Channel Strategies: How to Package and Deliver the Message"***

In The MEE Report, we found that the television and print media had not been very effective in positively affecting urban youth. Rap seemed to be a promising key to opening the lines of communication, since *97%* of Black urban teens like and listen to rap music. In addition, more than *90%* watch rap music videos on a regular basis. But rap isn't perfect. The symposium gave us a chance to look more closely at rap music.

That examination led to one of the key findings of the symposium: that rap is a sort of one-way street. Rap music is not effective for sending mainstream messages into the hip-hop culture. However, it is an invaluable tool urban teens use to describe their realities and send messages to themselves and the "powers that be" -- who so often aren't listening.

We knew from talking to young people that, to reach them, a message must be "from the street," (come from within the culture) and accurately represent their world view, behavior and styles of communication.

Other conference observations:

* At media outlets such as The Source, young people are communicating with young people -- their peers. We need more of them writing and making films and we need more outlets for their endless creativity. We must build bridges between *their* know-how and *our* access to means.

> "If you want a message that's really gonna reach young people, get on television and tell them that you have a job for them. You will get their attention."
>
> -- Octavia Hudson, Ph.D.

* Use community organizations that have close and credible ties to youth to disseminate positive messages. Also take messages and role models into the schools.
* Music videos can be a powerful vehicle to manipulate minds in a positive way; they are easily accessible.
* Peers talking to peers is a very powerful tool, i.e., teenage mothers talking to young

girls about sex and contraception.

* Creation of a television network for youth.
* Monthly forums should be held, where adults and youth can discuss common fears and problems.
* We need to change the direction of messages. Instead of adult-to-kid, we need more kid-to-kid communication, and also more kid-to-adult communication.
* Messages should be carefully targeted, not dispersed in a wide spray. The senders should differentiate hardcore from middle-class messages, for example.
* Adults must be real with their messages -- don't fake it. Don't water it down to soothe or soften the picture. And most of all, don't lie!
* Produce half-hour talk show programs, where black youth talk to other black youth in their city or across the country. Shows would have real interactions about real problems. The shows also would focus on good things about urban youth, not just problems and crime statistics.
* Use spokespersons who have really been there -- not athletes who don't know "the real deal." Show youth that even though it's rough, you can make it, if you take the right steps.
* We need support systems in the home. Even after youth hear the messages, they go home to their primary environment. Therefore, we must be sure that the messages have been repeated to parents and other adults. Educate them too!

> "I need to get involved, because I have to learn how to hear what I need to hear. The youth aren't having a problem communicating with each other. It's us!"
>
> -- Job Corps coordinator

IV. REACTION AND ANALYSIS -- (WHAT DID WE THINK ABOUT THAT?)

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IV. REACTION AND ANALYSIS -- (WHAT DID WE THINK ABOUT THAT?)

Overall, MEE was pleased with the results of the symposium. Our objectives were two-fold. One, to provide attendees with a better understanding of the cultural and communication dynamics of urban Black youth and, two, to develop media and communication strategies for reaching them with pro-health messages.

- Did we meet our goals?

The conference did turn out somewhat different from MEE's plan. From the very beginning, the atmosphere of the symposium was charged with special energy from the teens. Their inclusion in the process dramatically changed the dynamics of the program. When the youth were given this rare opportunity to share their opinions with adults, they took full advantage of the situation, expanding upon the topics presented to deal with issues well beyond the original scope of the gathering.

> "We [adults] have trouble listening to youth, no matter what the forum."
>
> - Patrick McLaurin, MEE

This energy, which led to emotional and spirited discussions during the workshops, meant that the process of reaching consensus became quite difficult. It was difficult to reach common ground, even among a gathering of people who were ostensibly committed to youth. Too many participants had their *own agendas* that clouded their ability to truly listen with an open heart and mind.

Even with these difficulties, however, we definitely met the critical first objective. Most participants found the symposium to be enlightening (91% of the evaluation respondents felt that objective #1 was met). Objective number #2 was a different story. There just was not enough time to develop the strategies (see design/process considerations later on in this section for the story). Overall, many found the proceedings to be emotionally draining, but ultimately worth it.

- Content Considerations -- Influence/Communication Strategies

A relatively surprising finding is that while MEE expected that the group would spend a lot of time considering the effectiveness of communications channels, it seems that the simple, old-fashioned approach may work best. As one of the facilitators commented, "What we found is that what kids were saying is come down, touch us, talk to us, not from on high." MEE concluded that spending time with our youth one-on-one, instilling positive

values and self-esteem, can be more powerful than all the other messages young people are bombarded with in the media and can successfully counteract negativity. "All of us adults are so busy," another MEE principal commented, "that's why we're looking for a quick, easy solution." MEE concluded that there are no easy answers.

> "There's a lot of talk going on, but what's going to be done? If you have the means, come down and help us -- not all of us want to be out there scared for our lives every day. How many of you are really willing to come out and get your hands dirty with us?"
>
> -- New York City Young Adult

Perhaps, we should consider a *two-pronged* approach for dealing with urban youth: (1) direct, personal interactions with teens, combined with (2) the use of traditional and non-traditional media. Getting more control over the messages disseminated through media outlets is a long-term project. The "each one, teach one" philosophy, however, embraced by each one of us in our own neighborhoods can have an immediate impact.

- Design/Process Considerations

Should we have considered changes in the process and design (setting expectations, and dealing with randomness & *hidden agendas*) of the symposium? Hindsight is twenty-twenty.

In a post-symposium evaluation, MEE felt that for the future they would consider some format design changes. For example, MEE felt that it should consider more effective ways to integrate the use of the panel discussions with the youth forum, so that the two groups would complement each other rather than create a polarized situation. Some adults felt that they didn't have a real chance to provide input into the symposium. Some felt that they came to get and share information and ended up spending too much time listening to what they perceived as an endless litany of semi-irrelevant complaints from the kids. One suggested idea is to have a *two-track system*, with adult and youth having separate forums and workshops and then bringing them together for a joint session.

Other suggested changes included attempting to find enough *funding* to hold the symposium over two complete days, so that panels and working sessions could take place at a more leisurely pace, allowing for decompression time. More people probably would have attended the first night's event if it have been preceded by a full day of crucial activities.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS (WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?)

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V. RECOMMENDATIONS (WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?)

MEE recommends four basic courses of action for the future:

- Sensitivity Training for Adults

The way in which we look at interactions between adults and youth needs to be turned upside down. Traditionally, adults have believed that all teens, especially minority youth, are so alienated from the mainstream society that they have no idea what is going on outside of their immediate arena. The truth of the matter is that though youth may not embrace the ideals and morals of the mainstream, they are very aware of its structure, realities and expectations.

> "You're not listening to me, pay attention. Please hear me! I'm crying out for help from you. I need you!"
>
> --Philadelphia teen

The youth of today are really bilingual -- they speak the language of both their world and ours. It is adults who seem to have the biggest problems bridging the gap between the two generations, mainly because they have problems truly listening, without imposing their view of the world. As we learned at the symposium, a difficult, yet critical step in reaching our young is reintroducing and re-sensitizing adults to urban youth. *Many of the symposium participants, in spite of the fact that they represented organizations that served urban youth, confessed to culture shock and alienation when faced with the reality of the young people's anger and frustration.* Those interactions ultimately led to better understanding and insight.

There is a critical need for training sessions for adults, to change their negative perceptions regarding urban youth and address their fear and alienation. We need to have messages targeted at adults, both within the minority community and in mainstream America, to create an open-mindedness that will allow them to begin a much needed dialogue and freely explore the culture and lives of the young people who will be the leaders of the next century. An important first step, would be the creation and dissemination of a discussion guide of The MEE Report, the Final Symposium Report and the MEE Video Documentary. The discussion guide will be based on the expert opinions of public health communicators, educators, and curriculum developers.

- Media Outlets & Forums - Created by and for Youth

We need to be committed to supporting and creating a new system for communicating with youth -- a system where not only the receivers, but the *senders* are deeply immersed in the hardcore, authentic culture of hip-hop. What better way to assure that your message is credible, "real" and effective than to have it created by the very people it is intended to reach. We must put pressure on the media -- print, radio and television, especially -- to make it a priority to create shows by and for teenagers. However, while putting pressure on current outlets to be inclusive of the youngest members of our society, we also must focus on making maximum use of alternative and non-traditional media (i.e., VHS videos). We must be willing to commit our time and, more importantly, our resources to creating new outlets, if necessary.

There is an important need for forums, both local and national in scope, where urban youth can interact with others like themselves -- sharing ideas, problems and solutions. Young people must not be left to feel that they are alone in dealing with the difficult realities of life in the 1990's, but must feel empowered, believing that they are part of a *community* that cares and is committed to making a difference in their lives.

- Personal and Peer Education

The personal, one-on-one approach, though seemingly the simplest, is at the same time one of the most effective means of communicating with youth. Too many are crying, "no one is talking or listening to me;" what they crave is personal attention from an adult who cares. Getting positive messages and affirmations on a daily basis, and having an opportunity to interact with grass roots role models can counteract much of the negativity teens are bombarded with in the media and in their communities.

Peers also play an important role in changing the outlook and behaviors of urban youth. We must facilitate the recruitment of a corps of peer leaders, who have received training in the areas of counseling, problem solving and conflict resolution. These peer leaders must be armed with the *facts*, not the fiction, of drug and alcohol abuse, violence, teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Only then will they be empowered to reach into their communities, break the spiral of silence, encourage dialogue and inspire their peers to reach for a brighter tomorrow.

- ***Additional Symposia***

We must continue our commitment to bring together the senders and receivers, so that the important dialogue that began in New York City can be replicated in urban centers all over America. The initial symposium was a valuable learning experience for MEE, providing new information, ideas and strategies.

We will incorporate into our future planning the feedback received from panelists, government agencies, teens and other participants, in order to create an even more responsive and informative forum. *Critical success factors* for future events include:

1* The need for a more prominent role in the symposium schedule of an orientation/goal setting session for all attendees.

2* The need to perform a more intensive pre-symposium briefing with the panelists, so that they remain focused on the goals and objectives of the symposium. MEE's goals and outcomes must be clear; we may then more closely scrutinize the panelist selection process in order to meet them.

3* The use of brief media clips from television shows, movies and rap music to better illustrate examples of positive and negative messages.

4* The desire to lengthen the duration of the symposium, in order to incorporate more opportunities for interaction between various constituencies.

APPENDIX A. - COPIES OF PRESS ARTICLES

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, MARCH 7, 1993
"TEENS URGE: HEAR REASON IN RAP" **- BY DENNIS ROMERO**

ATLANTA CONSTITUTION, MARCH 7, 1993
"REACHING THE HIP-HOP GENERATION" **- BY LYLE V. HARRIS**

EDUCATION WEEK, MARCH 10, 1993
"SYMPOSIUM URGES YOUTH AGENCIES TO BE 'HIP' TO CITY TEENAGERS"
- BY PETER SCHMIDT

Style
The Philadelphia Inquirer Sunday, March 7, 1993

Chuck D *of Public Enemy: "What you're really looking at is a cry for help."*

Teens urge: Listen to the reason in the rap

By Dennis Romero
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

NEW YORK — The symposium — held 48 blocks from Harlem, 100 miles from North Philly and 2,451 miles from South Central — was on the topic "Reaching the Hip-Hop Generation."

On Tuesday, at the conclusion of the two-day gathering at Manhattan's Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, men in pin-striped suits and women in velvet dresses — members of the media, social workers and educators who had paid up to $750 to attend — gathered in a room with lavender curtains and veneer paneling to ask teenagers and rappers this question:

How could rap be used as a vehicle to send positive messages to inner-city kids?

But vociferous youngsters turned the equation around: Maybe adults should be listening to the messages — nay, warnings — that are going out through rap instead of trying to find ways to use the street sound to preach to kids.

Or as Philadelphia rap group Sounds of Rage put it, upon grabbing the mike: "My life is mixed up/I need to be fixed up."

"What you're really looking at," said Public Enemy's Chuck D, smothered in black Malcolm X garb, "is a cry for help."

The symposium, put on by Philadelphia-based Motivational Educational Entertainment (MEE) with the backing of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, was a follow-up to a startling MEE study released last spring that found inner-city youths were not listening to traditional role models such as politicos, actors and sports stars.

But they were listening to rappers.

With that in mind, MEE invited rappers Chuck D, Chubb Rock and a host of media bigwigs to sit on panels and explore with invited teens the uses of hip-hop culture.

The kids, running with the rare opportunity to be heard, talked about more than just hip-hop. They talked about how they see themselves being shortchanged by education, the media and adults. They talked about being afraid of the violence in their schools, about how hard it is to find a New York Times in their neighborhoods, about the fact that one month is set aside for black history, a subject they believe should be taught year-round.

And they talked about their fears that marketers and television executives were looking for ways to make money off hip-hop, a form that they

See **RAP** on L4

Teens urge: Hear reason in the rap

RAP from L1

feel belongs to them.

"I am truly concerned that you are using me, you are using our culture, our creativity to bring destruction to us," said one youth, who added, "We want to make sure ... that hip-hop comes from us and nobody else." The young people said that adults could cause more change by touching their lives with personal gestures than by using the mass media.

"I mean, people, wake up," said Sounds of Rage member Snake Plitzkin. "Let the youth talk."

In the end, the feeling among the participants was that no rap song, however "phat," no movie, however "dope," and no television show, however "def," is going to save our children.

But some positive ideas came of the symposium, among them that more internships should be offered to youths, that community centers need to be fortified by the elite ranks of those in the audience, that a forum — some sort of talk show — needs to be established for teens, that middle-class blacks should stay in black neighborhoods to preserve communication and community, and that the media should portray inner-city youth more positively.

"I am not going to sit here and tell yo that I am in love with all rap music," said panelist Octavia Hudson, an official at the Prevention Resource Center at Buffalo State College. "But what I've learned is to respect their music."

One youth made a request of the adults present: "You need to stop and just say hello."

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Sunday, March 7, 1993
D
The Atlanta Journal
The Atlanta Constitution

PERSPECTIVE

REACHING THE Hip-Hop GENERATION

CAN RAPPERS AND THEIR MUSIC be enlisted in reaching troubled urban teenagers? Educators, social scientists and entertainers met in New York City last week to search for ways.

"Talking about problems is the first step in solving them. We need to stop worrying about airing our problems in front of white people."

– JOHNNETTA COLE, PRESIDENT OF SPELMAN COLLEGE

"Rap music is like the CNN for black people. It's urban guerrilla commentary."

– CHUCK D. OF PUBLIC ENEMY

"If rap can be a vehicle to inspire kids to stay in school, it's less likely that I will see them in the juvenile justice system."

– GLENDA HATCHETT JOHNSON, JUVENILE COURT JUDGE OF FULTON COUNTY

By Lyle V. Harris

New York — Long before Dr. Johnnetta Cole uttered the first words of her speech in a midtown hotel ballroom last week, Lamar Gober shot a disgusted look at the *nouvelle cuisine* salad on his plate and bolted for the exit.

"Soon as I saw them greens, I knew that wasn't wid it," said the 16-year-old rapper from North Philadelphia who performs with a group called Sounds of Rage. "I went to McDonald's and got a Quarter Pounder With Cheese."

Although the Spelman College president is considered one of the nation's top educators and is counted among the most influential black women in America, Lamar had never heard of Dr. Cole or her school.

While he didn't stick around to hear it, the theme of Dr. Cole's speech, "How to Reach the Hip-Hop Generation," was directed at black teens who, like Lamar, consider rap music not just a passing trend, but a way of life.

The '50s had the beatniks and the '60s had the hippies. But the '90s belong to the "hip-hoppers." It is a term derived from a catch phrase from the early days of rap when performers could excite an audience with the words, "To the hip hop, you don't stop."

Like past youth movements, the popularity of hip hop has set policymakers from an older generation wondering how to harness rap music as a force for positive change. To achieve that goal, they hope to enlist rap performers to become "preacher teachers" for their army of young listeners.

Motivational Educational Entertainment (MEE), a Philadelphia-based production company, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation sponsored a symposium last week in New York, the birthplace of rap, and tried to answer the musical question: "Can hip hop be socially correct and still be cool?"

MEE President Ivan Juzang said the symposium did not discover any "magical silver bullets" for reaching the hip-hop nation, but insists the pursuit is worth continuing.

"I don't know if rappers are the best messengers. But I do know they have the power to wake teenagers up emotionally, and I know Chuck D of Public Enemy will get more of their attention than George Bush ever could," Mr. Juzang said.

There is little debate about the size or loyalty of the audience. A recent survey showed about 97 percent of black teens listen regularly to rap music, and 96 percent watch rap videos on television.

Some of these teenagers routinely confront drug abuse, violent crime, teen pregnancy and high dropout rates. But these social problems are often fodder for some rap artists who glorify them to increase their anti-establishment appeal.

The MEE symposium drew 250 participants, including Coca-Cola media executives, representatives of black churches, officials of the Department of Health and Human Services, a representative from Atlanta Mayor Maynard H. Jackson's office, filmmakers and advertising agencies that seemed to be proclaiming, "Ich bin ein Hip-Hopper."

During two days of panel discussions, pin-striped executives and tweedy academics could be heard quoting rap artists by name and referring to black communities as "the 'hood."

In her speech, Dr. Cole said hip hop may provide a forum for discussing problems within the black community.

"Talking about our problems is the first step in solving them," she said. "We need to stop worrying about airing our problems in front of white people."

Once dismissed as a fad, hip hop has crossed the threshold of a mar-

Please see RAP, D4 ▶

Lyle V. Harris is a staff writer for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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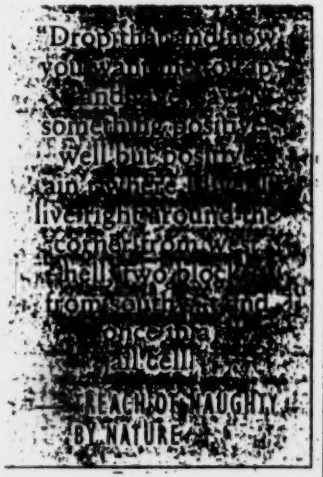
Rap: Atlanta judge says youths need positive messages

▶ Continued from D1

ginal counterculture into the borders of mainstream Americana. It has found a growing audience among white teens, who have embraced the rebellious attitudes embedded in the music that transcend racial differences.

But for many young blacks, hip hop is a source of profound racial and cultural identification, providing a vicarious sense of community sometimes missing in their own neighborhoods.



'Like CNN for black people'

"Rap music is like the CNN for black people," said Chuck D of Public Enemy. "It's urban guerrilla commentary."

Patrick McLaurin, research director for MEE, authored a 100-page report on honing new strategies for communicating with the hip-hop generation. The document offered a hint on bridging the gap: "It's not just what you say, it's how you say it."

Among the report's findings:

▶ Appeals to young black audiences must depict them in situations that they consider believable, and must be staged by characters whose attitudes and experiences mirror their own.

▶ Scare tactics don't work. Anti-drug public service announcements that chide teens to "Just Say No" have largely failed in the black community because they did not account for the communication styles that seem unique to black teens.

▶ Messages geared to hip-hoppers must spell out the message. One anti-drug advertisement depicting a frying egg as the consequences of drug use was deemed too vague.

Even if the message can be properly packaged, the question remains — who should carry the message? Talking to the hip-hop generation may be easy compared with the trickier proposition of getting them to listen.

Successful blacks who might otherwise be considered good role models may be rejected because they seem foreign to the hard-core street culture from which hip hop springs. Teenagers in the MEE survey who lived in Philadelphia and Washington D.C., were unable to name a black elected official, although both cities had black mayors at the time.

For many young blacks, skin color is no longer an unquestioned cultural marker, and it has been replaced with other yardsticks. Education, income, neighborhood and racial allegiance define the outsider.

"Every brother ain't a brother," said one rapper.

Even those who share experiences with street-toughened hip-hoppers might be hard-pressed to keep up with a counterculture driven by constant change.

The notion of "learning" hip hop as one might learn Spanish is deceptively simplistic. The protean patois of hip hop defies assimilation and revels in tweaking the sensibilities of those who would try to adopt it.

"Hip hop is like a chameleon," explains rapper Chubb Rock.

Different kinds of messages

The Atlanta hip-hop scene ranges from the "conscious" lyrics of home-grown groups like Arrested Development who emphasize pan-Africanism, to those of Kriss Kross, who offer a lighter, stylistic fare. At local dance clubs, Miami Bass is most popular for its rap songs, which stress booming beats over lyrics.

By comparison, West Coast rappers, including Ice Cube, Eazy-E and Too Short, are more likely to feature lyrics about street gangs, police brutality and souped-up cars.

Whether rappers are best suited to promote positive social messages remains to be seen. Two widely publicized campaigns organized by top rap acts aimed at curbing street violence produced at least one hit record, but few lasting results.

"I don't care who you are, if you turn into a preachy parental figure, these kids will turn you off," said Chubb Rock, who performed the song, "Self Destruction," calling for an end to black-on-black crime. "The best I can do is get them to dance to my music at the club, and maybe what I said on record will make them say, 'Damn, Chubb, you hit that one on the nail.' "

Reflecting a deep sense of victimhood felt among many black teens, the notion of white-led conspiracies aimed at black genocide is a dominant theme in rap music. Those feelings were heightened by the Rodney King beating trial, and media images that frequently portray blacks as criminals.

Another disturbing thing about hip hop is its treatment of women, who are often portrayed as sex objects. Women in rap songs are often casually referred to as "bitches."

"It's pitiful, but you can't help but listen to it. It's everywhere," said Traci Royall of Harlem. "If you try to tell guys what you think, they'd look at you like you was crazy. . . . [Rappers] are going to keep putting us down as long as they know there is money in it."

As long as such chauvinistic depictions persist — despite the success of female rap acts like Queen Latifah and Atlanta-based TLC — male rappers undercut their own credibility as role models.

Like many of the participants of the MEE conference, Glenda Hatchett Joahnson, chief juvenile court judge for Fulton County, confessed that she is not a fan of rap music. But she has also grown weary of watching young black offenders parade through her courtroom each day and is ready to try anything.

"Rap music is only a piece of the puzzle," she said. "We have to bombard our kids with positive messages from a lot of different sources."

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Symposium Urges Youth Agencies To Be 'Hip' to City Teenagers

By Peter Schmidt

NEW YORK—It became clear that this was no ordinary symposium when the four presenters grabbed their microphones from the dais and began to rap.

"My life is mixed up and needs to be fixed up!" exclaimed Lamar Gober, 16, of Philadelphia, one of the younger members of the rap group Sounds of Rage.

Some members of the audience wore neckties, others sported hooded sweatshirts with "Flavor" written across the front. Inner-city teenagers sat among representatives of churches, nonprofit organizations, and federal agencies. The speakers included the rap stars Chubb Rock and Chuck D.

The symposium, held last week at a hotel here, was entitled "Reaching the Hip-Hop Generation." Its goal was to give groups and agencies that are trying to reach young people like Lamar a better understanding of the cultural and communication dynamics of their audience.

The symposium was inspired by a market research study funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation concluding that most campaigns to encourage black urban teenagers to avoid drugs, stay in school, protect themselves from AIDS, and engage in other positive behaviors have failed miserably. *(See Education Week, June 10, 1992.)*

In an effort to develop an effective strategy for reaching members of the "hip-hop" culture, which grows out of the rap-music scene, the symposium brought the intended recipients of such messages together with the human-service providers, educators, and policymakers who are trying to send them.

On hand to help bridge the gap between the two groups were rappers, music-video producers, filmmakers, a magazine publisher, and entertainment and advertising executives.

Sponsored by Motivational Educational Entertainment, the black-owned research and consulting firm that conducted the study, the event drew support from Robert Wood Johnson, the federal departments of Energy and Health and Human Services, and the federal Center for Substance Abuse Prevention.

"I go to hundreds of conferences on the problems of inner-city youth, but we rarely get the insight of youth on their own conditions," said Ronald B. Mincy, a senior research associate at the Urban Institute.

The Rev. Rodney S. Sadler Jr., the assistant director for leadership-development programs at the Congress of National Black Churches, said that the task of reaching members of the hip-hop culture "challenges organizations and institutions to be responsive to a group that is fundamentally counterinstitutional."

"We have to accept their culture as a valid culture and utilize their media to reach them," he said.

'Spiral of Silence'

The market study, released last May, found that black urban teenagers inhabit a closed subculture that encourages dangerous behavior, threatens to ostracize those who do not conform to its views, and appears almost as alienated from its own African-American traditions as it is from the white mainstream.

"The youth are going around making up their own rules," said Chuck D, a member of the prominent rap group Public Enemy.

"Black youth," he added, "are not waiting for society to deliver the facts."

Patrick R. McLaurin, the marketing firm's research director, characterized the hip-hop culture as diverse, differentiated by age and sex, extremely male-centered, and focused on issues related to power and sex.

Members of this culture also tend to receive little positive reinforcement when they do well in school or elsewhere. Their fear of saying something that will cause them to be ostracized, combined with a taboo against judging the actions of others, help to create a "spiral of silence" that prevents them from trying to positively influence their peers' attitudes toward drugs, sex, and other issues, the study found.

Chubb Rock, who often delivers positive messages in his music, observed that many members of the hip-hop culture want to communicate with their parents, but feel "parents want to preach instead of listen."

William Horn

"Black youth are not waiting for society to deliver the facts," says Chuck D, center, a member of the prominent rap group Public Enemy. "The youth are going around making up their own rules."

Swanie G. Phillips, a community-outreach coordinator for a clinic at the Center for Research on Adolescent Drug Abuse at Temple University, said African-American adults are mistaken if they think today's black youths are simply going through the same things they did.

Craig Lewis, an 18-year-old from Chicago, concurred.

"In the 50's and 60's, you worried about fist fights. Now, we worry about Uzi [submachine guns]," he observed. "You worried about syphilis. Now we worry about AIDS."

"It takes your youth away," Mr. Lewis said. "The odds are definitely stacked against us."

Living 'R-Rated' Lives

The market study and other research efforts have also found that black urban youths are voracious consumers of nonprint media. They typically go to the movies about once a week and live in households where television is watched about 77 hours per week, about 50 percent more than the average for other groups.

Yet the typical member of the hip-hop culture also "is a very sophisticated media consumer," easily able to tune out public-service and commercial messages, said Ivan J. Juzang, the marketing firm's president.

A black teenage girl interviewed in one of the firm's videos describes public-service messages as appropriate "for 7-year-olds." A teenage boy talks of seeing an anti-drug commercial "and going right back on the street, and putting that stuff up my nose, and thinking about the commercial while I'm doing it."

Using television to reach these youths is difficult because the medium tends to be "G-rated" and thus unable to address the harsh reality of their culture, said Alonzo Brown, a senior vice president of Uptown Entertainment who is developing a television situation comedy and feature films aimed at black audiences.

R-rated movies and rap music have the most potential for getting positive messages across, participants agreed.

Racing Madison Avenue

But however effective they are, public-service campaigns account for just a small fraction of the messages bombarding young people, and all the media need to become more sensitive to their impact on urban youths, several participants said.

They also expressed concern that their findings on how to reach the hip-hop culture also could be used to help corporations further exploit the black-youth market to sell such products as malt liquor and tobacco.

"We want to know that we are not being used," said Lumumba Bandele, a 21-year-old member of a rap group.

But since corporations will do their own research anyway, Mr. Juzang said, at least the symposium can make the data available to nonprofit and other groups that probably would not do such research otherwise.

RATINGS FROM SYMPOSIUM EVALUATION SHEETS

RATINGS:	Very Favorable 5	4	3	2	Very Unfavorable 1	% Total
Overall Rating of the Symposium	23%	31%	46%	0%	0%	100%
Rating the Video Documentary	33%	42%	25%	0%	0%	100%
Rating the Keynote Speech	69%	23%	8%	0%	0%	100%
Rating "Understanding the Hip–Hop Generation" Panel	31%	38%	31%	0%	0%	100%
Rating the Message Strategy Session	8%	42%	42%	0%	8%	100%
Rating the Media Channels Session	20%	0%	70%	10%	0%	100%
Rating Teen's Input/Involvement	33%	25%	17%	25%	0%	100%
Rating the Panelists:						
Morning Session –	25%	33%	42%	0%	0%	100%
Afternoon Session –	18%	27%	55%	0%	0%	100%
Rating Facilitators	17%	42%	17%	8%	17%	100%
Rating Symposium's Effectiveness at Raising Your Consciousness about:						
Urban Teen Culture –	33%	50%	8%	8%	0%	100%
Communications Dynamics of Teens –	25%	42%	17%	17%	0%	100%

	YES	NO	N/A	% Total
Meeting Symposium Objectives:				
Better Understanding of Hip–Hop Generation –	91%	0%	9%	100%
Developing Media/Communications Strategies –	45%	45%	9%	100%

APPENDIX B. - SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FORMS

THE MEE SYMPOSIUM: *"REACHING THE HIP-HOP GENERATION"*

Comments from Symposium Evaluation Sheets

What motivated you to come to the Symposium?

"Reading The MEE Report."

"To meet folks with shared concerns about urban youth."

"I was impressed by the Report and I work with the Hip-Hop generation."

"My work with teens."

What did you like most about the Symposium?

"Documentary, Keynote Speaker, and the blend of people who participated."

"Cross-section of participants."

"Organization and quality of participants."

"Comments from teens."

"Honest talk."

"The kids."

"Interaction with individuals and agencies from a broad spectrum of special interest areas."

"Opportunity to network and the panelists were quite accessible."

In your opinion were the Symposium objectives met? If not, explain?

"Yes, these objectives were met intelligently and head on."

"Not really - we never really addressed specific strategies. But interactions among participants were very illuminating nevertheless."

Comments from Symposium Evaluation Sheets

In your opinion were the Symposium's objectives met? If not, explain? (cont.)

"Strategies were loosely considered in the rapidly deteriorating sessions during the afternoon and with the cancellation of the final plenary."

"The focus appeared to be on what had not been done rather than methods to improve the shortfalls. I saw little in media strategies and communication that was embraced by hip hop attendees let alone those who did not attend."

"Yes, but it was difficult because of the organization of the panel discussions and the weakness of the facilitator. Very little quantifiable and objective data was presented. Questions from the attendees were restricted because of the need to let teens speak."

"Though it promoted the dialogue of understanding, it did not summarize youth reaction. Their message and values needed more direction based on confusing and contradicting statements. Their presence was important and valuable."

"#1 - Yes. #2 - No, because there were so many intra-cultural issues between the teens and adults that needed to be addressed first. Communication needed to take place before we could get to the creative process."

What information from the Symposium can you apply to your own program?

"Concepts of teen appeal."

"The message creation model that is outlined in the video and The MEE Report."

"Legitimate fears and concerns of youth."

"Youth feedback, expert opinion."

"I was impressed by alternative media suggestions (i.e., cable outlets, video, and video games)."

"How to communicate with teens."

"Messaging strategies that will appeal to inner-city youth."

"Ideas for developing strategies of our own to reach hip-hop culture."

Comments from Symposium Evaluation Sheets

What was most the valuable part of the Symposium?

"Keynote address, youth participation, and rappers presentation."

"The breadth of the participants' experiences."

"Hip-hop comments from teens."

"Meeting with other professionals who have an interest in reaching this market. Inter-organization perspectives."

"Hearing youth express their disappointment in African-American adult leadership at the community and family level."

"The panelists - their accessibility."

"Listening to the kids express themselves."

What was <u>least</u> useful/beneficial aspect of the Symposium?

"The least beneficial aspect of the symposium was the lack of constituencies among the attendees. It was particularly disheartening that more educators, especially teachers, principals, social workers, psychologists, etc., were not represented in significant numbers."

"Lack of open mindedness on the parts of adult and teen participants."

"Role for moderators to follow a seemingly poorly conceived methodology to handle the break out sessions. Also, the brevity of the symposium forced participants to attempt to gain a great deal of information and develop strategies in too limited a time."

"I thought the facilitator really lost the group's confidence..."

"Not enough time."

"The regimen was sometimes inflexible to other creative methods of solving problems."

"Experts giving opinions on youth perspective."

Comments from Symposium Evaluation Sheets

How has <u>The MEE Report</u> helped you?

"Given a source document, the ways in which youth communicate and methodologies to communicate with youth. Made me more sensitive to lifestyles of young urban people today."

"To understand rap music."

"To understand the issues and problems facing our youth."

How can your organization use the video documentary?

"In our work with community groups, advocacy issues, and as a teaching tool for staff who lack grassroot experiences."

"The video can be used as a reference for clients and individuals that need to better understand this market, but do not come in contact with it."

"Conscious raising. It needs accompanying consultant activity. On its own, impact may be a one time event."

"As a resource tool."

How can MEE Productions be of service in the future?

"Source of education for today's urban clergy."

"Stay visible on issues (i.e., violence, etc.) impacting our communities."

"Continue to be role models for our youth."

"Share results of research -- studies - meetings."

"Providing school personnel with a perspective that focuses on the African-American culture -- good for sensitivity training, keynote for curriculum change efforts, etc."

Comments from Symposium Evaluation Sheets

Additional Recommendations....

- **On the Symposium**

"Longer with addition of scholars and more young people."

"Excellent format; however, if done again youth need to be visible."

"Too short, too rigid, too biased."

"Prepare panelist and keep them focused on the subject at hand."

"Sessions too large to receive all input available."

"Extend to greater numbers of educators, especially teachers who often spend more time with some of these youths than others by the very nature of their role as teachers."

"Need to have a follow-up symposium with more time for exchange of views."

"Let's try it again, maybe some preliminary groundwork building (before) into the actual symposium."

- **Future Projects/Issues**

"Work in school districts to educate teachers/administrators."

"Say how to improve communication."

"Must address what works."

"Development of consultants to deliver message. I believe we know more about what does not appeal and not enough on what does."

A Matter of Degrees

Motivational Educational Entertainment has released an educational video targeted at inner city youth "at risk" of dropping out of school. The program entitled "A Matter of Degrees" uses rap artists, taped interviews and "rap" sessions featuring teens who have rebounded from personal and family problems or poor choices to return to school and regain control of their lives. This video is pro-educational and uses high profile rap artists including KRS One, Public Enemy and Black Sheep to encourage youngsters to stay in school or if they have dropped out, to return to school and graduate. A powerful and effective tool to reach inner city youth ambivalent about their education, the video captures a language and style that appeals to teenagers while relating to them. This twenty-three minute program was co-produced by Noble Films and MEE Productions. It's available for purchase 10/93. ($95.00)

FROM: MEE to YOUTH

MEE is a West Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) communications company taking socially responsible entrepreneurship in a new direction. Nationally recognized for it's contemporary research and expertise on urban youth, MEE is taking a novel approach to solving inner-city youth problems: telling adults to shut up and listen while asking teens "What's Up?"

A research, consulting and video production company, with a mission to understand, reach and positively affect urban youth, MEE is achieving its objective through cutting edge, primary research and creative media applications. Research and videos include:

- The MEE Report: "Reaching the Hip-Hop Generation" . . . 5/92 ($25.00)
- MEE's Video Documentary (1994 New York Festival Award) . . . 2/93 ($60.00)
- The Final MEE Symposium Report . . .5/93 ($35.00)
- MEE Report Update on Violence, Substance Use & Abuse, and Sexuality . . . 10/93 ($25.00)

By The Way . . .

MEE conducts quarterly communication workshops.
To schedule a workshop tailored
especially for your organization or agency or for more information
about the location, dates, and topics of upcoming workshops,
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